

Good afternoon Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker and distinguished members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee.

My name is Hope Ricker, I am a Past President of the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs (MAAF) and a member of the Pittston Fair, one of Maine's smaller agricultural fairs, which runs for 4 days.

Today I am here to testify in favor of LD 2026. As a member of a small, all volunteer fair, one must wear many "hats" at the fairgrounds. The more tasks that we can complete preceding the opening of the gate to our fair guests, makes it much easier on the small core of volunteers that we have available. I am speaking specifically about our Agricultural Exhibition Hall, where local folks enter their fancy-work, quilts, canning etc. vying for ribbons, prizes and also bragging rights. The person who sets up the quilts and fancy- work following judging, may also be the breakfast cook in the Fair Food Booth, or the person doing the spinning demonstration in the fiber area. Having the ability to judge the many items entered and set up the Hall prior to the opening of the Fair Gates, allows us to better utilize our group of volunteers, along with the importance of giving our Fair guests the entire educational and entertainment experience, whether they attend opening day or closing. Being able to receive stipend dollars allows us to increase the premiums paid to the exhibitors, which then goes back into the local economy.

We have many Senior Citizens attend our small fair and the Exhibition Hall is one of their favorite stops on the fairgrounds. They traditionally come earlier in the day and are disappointed if exhibits are not open when they arrive on Opening Day.

The ability to judge and receive stipend dollars the day before our fair opens would be a real help to my small Fair and other Fairs like us. Agricultural Fairs are the premier agricultural education entity in the State of Maine while providing affordable family friendly entertainment and exhibitions. Help us keep that going for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hope Ricker, Past Pres. MAAF and member Pittston Fair